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C O N F I D E N T I A L TAIPEI 004818

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: VICE PRESIDENT LU HSIU-LIEN NAMED ACTING DPP PARTY CHAIRMAN

Classified By: AIT Acting Director David Keegan, Reasons:
1.4 (b/d)

1. (U) Immediately following the December 7 meeting of the DPP Central Standing Committee (CSC), a beaming Vice President Lu Hsiu-lien announced to the media that the CSC had unexpectedly selected her by consensus to serve as Acting DPP Party Chairman to fill temporarily the vacancy left by Su Tseng-chang, who resigned to take responsibility for the

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outcome of the December 3 local elections.

2. (C) DPP Director of International Affairs and Legislator Bi-Khim Hsiao told AIT that she was surprised by the proposal to nominate Lu, which came from CSC member and Legislator Trong Chai (Tsai Tung-jung). Lu will serve only until a new chairman is elected in January, Hsiao said. At its December 14 meeting the CSC will pass the outline plan for the election of the new chairman, which should take place in mid-January, prior to the Lunar New Year holiday.

Comment

3. (C) Vice President Lu has a reputation for being unpredictable and outspoken and has generally been sidelined by President Chen. Prior to the December 3 local elections, she predicted openly that the DPP would not do well, and afterwards she announced that she and the president both had responsibility for the election reverses. Although a potential 2008 presidential candidate, Lu's chances of winning the DPP nomination are rated much lower than other potential candidates such as Su Tseng-chang. One of Lu's strong points, which may have led to her being selected as acting chairman, is that she has not been involved in any of the string of scandals that has tarnished the DPP and its leadership.

4. (C) Trong Chai, the founding chairman of the Formosan Association for Public Affairs (FAPA), expressed his intention to compete in the election for the next DPP chairman during a December 5 meeting of the DPP Mainstream Coalition faction, according to the press. Trong Chai's success in installing Lu as interim DPP Chair will be troubling to anyone hoping the DPP would take a measured, moderate course after its December 3 defeat. His candidacy to succeed Lu will likely motivate the New Tide and others to find a less fundamentalist alternative. The future course of the DPP could be determined by their success or failure.

KEEGAN